

# HEAVEN'S METAL

## Divinefire



**JET CIRCUS  
DAVID BENSON  
NEAL MORSE, SAINT  
FIREBALL MINISTRY SAYS**

REVIEWS: LO-RUHAMAH, ILLUMINANDI  
VENIA, ALETHEIAN, WHITECROSS, WAR MACHINE  
TOTALISTI, F5, AMOS, TAKETH, IMMORTAL SOULS, IYREL  
EVROKLIDON, WALK THE SKY, SHINING STAR, AVIAN, & MORE

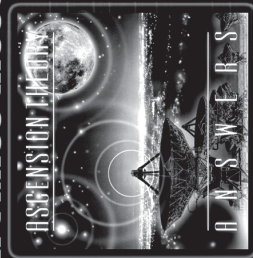


Dec/Jan 2006 Issue #61 \$2.95



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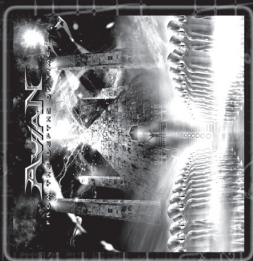
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**ASCENSION THEORY**  
Answers



**PYRAMAZE**  
Legend of the Bone Carver



**AVIAN**  
From the Depths of Time



**SHINING STAR**  
Enter Eternity



**WARMACHINE**  
The Beginning of the End

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# HEAVEN'S METAL

## So much to say, so little space...

Please go to our website and check out the interviews that were (only) started in this issue. These guys had such great things to say, but we had to cut them all short due to space. I hope all of you have access to the internet and can check these out, because it was hard to edit what we'd print and what we'd save for the internet. I love metal and I am so digging some of the new albums hitting right now.

We are printing Heaven's Metal Fanzine at our printer in Michigan, which takes longer than Kinko's did, but is more cost-effective. We expect the delivery to still be around the middle of the month on the cover (December 15th) and so on, but if there's a delay this first time out, we'll try to get the kinks out before the next one (Feb/March).

Grace and Peace,



## ELEMENTS

- 04 METALTRACKS** Jet Circus, Saint, Stryken  
Dbeality, Stryper, Alice Cooper, Guardian  
Tiles, Rick Wakeman, Bride, Pale Horse  
Haste The Day, Sinai Beach, & more.
- 08 DIVINE FIRE** Rowe talks to Rivel.
- 12 NEAL MORSE** Prog rock's finest talks...
- 14 WHAT FIREBALL MINISTRY SAYS** Is it  
a fireball or a ministry? Or both? Huh?
- 16 ALBUM REVIEWS** Aletheian, Whitecross  
Lo-Ruhamah, Illuminandi, Venia, War Machine  
F5, Amos, Immortal Souls, Evroklidon +...
- 21 COLUMNS** Steve Rowe and Pastor Bob

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# In these evil times we will rise!



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# METAL TRACKS

*Hard-news-for-metal-heads*



## Jet Circus

### What has been happening with Jet Circus in the last year and a half?

I have to go back to the year 2002, when I decided to write and record a new album, I was fed up with waiting for Terry, who never could make up his mind about what he wanted to do with the band. I wanted all those years just to get going again and create some music, but I never actually felt any pressure that I must do it. So I waited and waited and finally I thought this was it – end of waiting. So I decided to make a solo album and I began right away, the same night as I decided to go ahead. No way back, that's what I wanted this time. During November 2002 and November 2004 I wrote the songs and recorded the album. Then it was released in March 2005. The reason it changed the name from originally being named my solo album to be named Jet Circus is just natural, as Terry told me he wanted to quit the band in the midst of the recordings of *Look At Death Now*. As the only member of the band, my solo album and the next Jet Circus album is the same thing; and, of course, I never wanted to drop the name of the band. So, what happened the last year and a half was the release of an extremely good and brand new Jet Circus album – *Look At Death Now*. It's been out for six months now and it climbs all the time and takes Jet Circus to new listeners in Brazil, Venezuela, Chile, Argentina, Mexico as well as to the old friends in the USA, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. The response is really overwhelming.

### What are your plans for 2006 and beyond?

I have a remix project going on for *Look At Death Now*. All songs will be remixed in modern dance versions. Release 2006. Please contact my super organizer Ivar Lie if you are a professional producer and interested in contributing [a-il@online.no]. Then I will finish the long time, from-the-archives-album, *No Mercy For The Living Dead*. It's a great album that deserves to be available for the JC friends. The remastering of *Step On It* is in progress. This will also have some never-released songs from the original sessions, as well as both of the cover songs we did, "Be Bop A Lula" and Gene Vincent's "Let's Dance." Remastering done by the superior Daniel Fossum, supervised by myself. Release 2006. Then I'm on two songs on the Liberty 'n Justice album, *Soundtrack of a Soul*. I will do one song for Australian Templar. The song is called "Witch Hunt" and is a super groovy hard rock piece.

### What do you see as the next big thing musically? What is impressing you at the moment?

Whatever it will be, it will be something easy to understand and fast to expire. That's the spirit of the time. Easy to chew, so everyone can buy it. Minimalistic and flat, far away from the introvert progressive rock of the 70's, that you at least had to pretend to have a brain to understand. Now brain is gone and body is in and money is everything. Present new music on that ground and you have a home run.

## News bullets

**Speakers for the Dead** guitarist **Jason Garcia** (formerly of Gryp) has been diagnosed with brain and lung cancer, and he will soon start radiation and chemotherapy. He still plans to finish his guitar parts for the new album, set for a worldwide 03/06 release. The band would appreciate including Jason in your thoughts and prayers. Since Jason will be unable to work for a long time, a trust fund is set up. If you wish to make a donation to help Jason pay his medical bills, send a check payable to: Pilgrim Medical Trust - Jason Garcia. Send it to: Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, 3673 N. First, Fresno CA 93726. Send correspondence directly to: Speakers for the Dead, 366 E. Heron Ct, Fresno, CA 93720. Anything you can do would be much appreciated.

**Mike Dunlap**, drummer of **Sinai Beach**, threw his back out at the beginning of November. Doctors believe he may have a herniated disc. This put a halt to the band's tour plans, yet they hope to get on the road soon with Mike. The band recently filmed their 2nd music video for "To The Church." The band is happy to announce 2 new members: **Daniel Barachkov** (Killing Theory), and **Sean Durham** (Falling Cycle).

**Haste the Day** hosted MTV2's *Headbanger's Ball* on 11/19. **Jimmy Ryan** has announced that he is leaving the band. He had this to say: "Before anyone jumps to any conclusions, it was my own decision. The guys in the band are my best friends and my brothers and my decision to leave has been a difficult one. I will miss them quite a bit as they continue on as I am confident I will... My last show will be 12/30 in Indianapolis, IN. If you can come out, please do so we can have one last dance."

**Stryper** is planning a first-ever acoustic church tour in 2006. They will play in churches that seat 750 or more. If interested, contact Dave@DeepSouthEntertainment. *Reborn* is the first Stryper disc released on vinyl in 14 years.

**Saint** is viewing footage filmed last summer to see if any of the video is good enough to produce. **Dee** and **Rich** have 5 new songs, and the rest of their new project is almost complete. It should be released in late winter/early spring. According to the band's website: "...we'll be recruiting a new drummer, as **Tim Lamberson** is leaving to work on his own projects. Tim will be greatly missed. He's been a faithful member of the band and we wish him the best. Let's keep Tim in our prayers."

The latest singer unveiled for the **Liberty N Justice** project is Sebastian Bach (Skid Row). He will sing "Another Nail" which he co-wrote with Mike Layne, Justin Murr, and Kerri Kelli. The track features Kerri on guitar, Tim Gaines on bass, and Gary Horrie on drums. The CD is scheduled for an early 2006 release.





## David Benson | dbeality

### Please bring us up to date. What have you been up to for the past couple of years?

I have spent the past three years working and writing the songs on the *dbeality* CD with Robert Sweet and Dale Greer.

### Tell me about the new album.

The new CD has something for the fans of metal and doom-oriented rock. It is also for the fans of a more modern and hard sounding music, I feel that we captured a well-rounded sound on *dbeality*. Robert did a superb job in producing this record. His drumming was incredible, too! Bob Moore at Sound Lab in Columbia, S. C. did an excellent job in engineering and mixing the record. And of course, my guitarist, Dale Greer, really stepped up to the plate. I have never worked with such talented artists.

### You mentioned, "Getting away from the Ozzy thing" a little, why so?

What I meant was that several of the songs on *dbeality* step away from Ozzy's style. These songs are slightly different vocally, but my faithful fans will be happy to know that I am still true to my style.

### What new songs stand out to you?

"Only God Knows," "Fall Upon Your Knees," and "Victory" really stand out to me. I'm really excited about how God smiled down upon us and gave me each lyric. This is the case for every song on this record.

### Tell us about the lyrics.

We have addressed many issues on this album. "Only God Knows" speaks of the loneliness we feel at some point in our lives. Then it tells the

listener that God is the only one Who understands this pain. He is the only one Who can take it away. "Fall Upon Your Knees" is a call to repentance for both the saved and the un-saved alike. "Victory" is a song of encouragement. "Victory is in Jesus Christ."

### What does the future hold for David Benson's music?

I plan on growing and staying involved in music and the ministry of music. I don't plan on reinventing the wheel... I just want to make a better tire. I want to be the very best that I can be at what I do. And play live as much as possible.

### What sort of business dealings have you been part of in the past?

I have made both good and bad business decisions in the past, but I believe I'm getting better and even wiser in this area.

### What are some lessons that you have learned?

I have learned that no man can be trusted. We can only trust in God to guide us in every decision we make, even business decisions.

### What catches your ear? Why?

I'm a very big fan of classic Hard Rock and Metal ....I just like the sound old records and the way they were made.

### Give me a short list of 5 to 10 metal albums that everyone reading Heaven's Metal should own?

- 1) Stryper- *Reborn*
- 2) Whitecross- *Triumphant Return*
- 3) Sacred Warrior- *Masters Command*
- 4) Darrell Mansfield- *Revelation*
- 5) Dbeality

The long-lost '73 concert film (with lots of goofiness a la The Beatles) **Alice Cooper's** *Good To See You Again*, Alice Cooper has been released by Shout! Factory. Featuring the original lineup filmed on the *Billion Dollar Babies* tour, tearing it up on such classics as: "School's Out," "I'm Eighteen," and "No More Mr. Nice Guy"! DVD extras include a feature-length commentary by Alice, 5.1 Surround Sound, deleted scenes, and outtakes.

*Out There*, the new solo disc by **Rick Wakeman**, keyboardist of Yes, is slated for a 10/25 release. Highly anticipated, the disc reflects Rick's longstanding assertion that space exploration has deeply influenced his songwriting for years. In tribute, a song is dedicated to each fallen astronaut from the Space Shuttle Columbia.

**Transfigural Form** is working on a new disc tentatively titled *Destroyed*, with a planned 2006 release. While the "death metal grunting" will remain, the trademark keyboards that TF fans have grown accustomed to will be replaced with "intricately layered guitar harmonies."

**Tiles** has pieced together the band's missing puzzle piece with the return of original drummer **Mark Evans**. **Chris Herin**, the band's guitarist, commented: "We auditioned some excellent drummers... Mark obviously had the inside track and when we got together his drumming was as impressive as ever... so he really became the obvious choice. We're excited about the new songs and look forward to bringing them to life with Mark's energy and creativity." Tiles is working on their 5th CD and plan to enter the studio in early-2006. Evans was a founding member of Tiles and appears on the band's first three releases: *Tiles*, *Fence the Clear*, and *Presents of Mind*. These discs were reissued in 2004 and feature previously unreleased bootleg video, unreleased songs, demos, expanded packaging, photos, etc.

The new **Pale Horse** CD, *In the Theatre Of My Mind* is in the works, with plans for an early 2006 release. Featured songs will be: "Crisis of Conscience," "Mirror Image," and "A Tension Deficit."

*First Strike*, the disc by **Stryken**, will be available for the first time ever on CD from Girder Music before Christmas. In addition to the original songs, a bonus song "Surprise," new artwork and liner notes will be included.

Full Armor Clothing now endorses the band members of **Kwench**. **Brian Curtis** was recently endorsed by Peavey.

**Abandon** has finished recording their new CD and is almost done mixing. Artwork has been selected for the cover and the CD layout is being finished. They have recently been picked up by Halo Guitars as a sponsor and hope to have an even bigger announcement once the CD is ready for release. Their CD release party will be a huge event for fans.

Although **Mike Tenenbaum** of **Akacia** is recovering from back surgery, he spent much of the time writing music and Akacia is about to embark on an odyssey of recording a triple album.

**Tykküs** is excited that they will open for Dokken on 12/3 in Tempe, Arizona.

# METAL TRACKS

Page 6



## Saint | Germanified

### Tell me about what you've been doing in Europe. Is this a "European version" of Saint?

Josh Kramer: I've been having an amazing time at first practicing with 4 excellent and very professional musicians 2 days a week before our first show (07 October in Kaiserslautern). The band members and their families have been taking me to incredible historic places (and) taking volumes of photos, which I will share in time. Everyone is feeding me very well and not letting me spend any money on food and making me feel so welcome here. One of the guitarists playing in the line up, shred-meister, Tillman Ruby, is a genealogy guru helping me locate my ancestors, which stretch back here to almost the 15th century. I've been making so many new friends and contacts making new plans for future German fest shows next year. We are hopeful to have all Saint members perform here on next go' round.

### How do the "USA version" guys of Saint (like Richard Lynch) feel about this?

Envious but glad that I am making diplomatic strides for the Saint Organization as well as representing The U.S.A. in a positive way. There have been 4 newspaper articles written so far regarding the concerts and amazingly with all of the bands that performed is my mug in the picture, snarling and singing my guts out.

### How has it gone over there? What was the reaction like?

It has been a dream come true for all of us. The shows were a great success. The diehard Saint fans went nuts and made me feel like I have been reunited with long lost friends. Many metal heads who've never heard of Saint before are new fans. We've made quite a positive splash over here.

### How do the Euro guys feel about the gigs?

They have totally enjoyed the shows and have dedicated themselves to practice very hard and long before I got here to learn an hour of Saint material. I walked into the practice room and we blasted off with the set and I couldn't believe how well they learned the songs so accurately.

### Tell us about your book, *Nicolas*. What is it about and how did it become an audio book?

The story is about the legend of Saint Nicolas Of Myra (spelled as "Nicholas," in many cultures), whose life was shrouded in mystery and folklore. It is constructed with a healthy bit of creative licence as is the story of Camelot. We are aware of the existence of the characters, but we have no idea what life was like for them as children, or conversations they had as well as many of their personal life experiences. Basically I gave him a life and filled in the blanks with fantasy whipped up completely by my imagination and improvisations of several of the actors in the audio book. It started out first as a dry journal study from vague accounts of him derived from library books and a few internet rhetorical accounts. My study evolved into a script. At first I tried to read it like a lot of audio books are done – with just me doing the reading, but it was totally boring to me, so I began to incorporate music students and their families just for fun.

[To read the entire interview, go to [hmmag.com](http://hmmag.com)]

## [nothin' but] News bullets

**Lawrence Bishop II** of **Bride** has kept busy with ministering, professional bronc riding, bass player for the **Fire Choir**, and finally, his second solo release, *Prayer Of A Bad Man*. The disc boasts rugged blues-based rock. Meanwhile, Bride's lead singer, **Dale Thompson**, won 2 Kentucky State Bench Pressing Awards. He benched 560 lbs at a body weight of 215.

**Rex Carroll** of **Whitecross** is teaching a Guitar Master Class and will perform with top area musicians in Guatemala City at Studio Muse Nov 15-20. For a limited time, you can purchase 3 Whitecross discs for \$14.99 on their website: *Equilibrium*, *One More Encore*, and *Unveiled*.

**Ken Tamplin** has kept busy producing discs for Aamion Goodwin and **Daize Shayne**. Three of Daize's new songs were featured on MTV's *Laguna Beach* in mid-November. Daize will be featured on MTV's website, and her music will be included on the MTV DVD series. She also will be a featured surfer in a Net Zero national television commercial. The commercial was shot at Surf Rider Beach in Malibu 12/5 and 12/6. The spot will run through Christmas.

According to the **Guardian** Myspace website, the band is working on getting *Fire and Love* and *Miracle Mile* licensed for re-issue. The plan is to release them together so that 2 CDs will not have to be purchased. The band will delve into the archives to add bonus material, and there is a rumor of a re-recorded Guardian classic. They hope it will hit the stores by the end of April. "The red tape is licensing."

**Jamie Rowe** hopes to post pics soon of the Nashville acoustic set they did – the first time the band played together in years.

Recently released: **Whitecross**, *Unveiled* with the 1986 demo that got them signed to Pure Metal; **LSU** *Dogfish Jones*; **Six Feet Deep**'s *Struggle*, and *The Road Less Traveled*; **Circle of Dust**'s *Disengage / Refractorchasm*, *Circle of Dust*, and *Brainchild*; **Stairway**, *No Rest, No Mercy*; **Heaven's Rage**, *Temporary*; **Lucid**'s *Self-Titled*, and *Broken*; **Scott Stapp**'s *The Great Divide*; and the solo disc by **Frank Hart** (Atomic Opera), *Human Liturgy*. Upcoming releases: **Deliverance**, *River Disturbance* +2 bonus tracks; **Lust Control**, *We Are Not Ashamed* +18 (!) bonus tracks, **Seventh Power**, *Untitled* (Robert Sweet on drums), and **Final Axe**, *Untitled* (also with Robert Sweet on drums).

**Seventh Star** is currently on the *Widespread Panic* tour alongside of Embrace Today.

**The Showdown** will be going into the studio in Jan/Feb with Paul Ebersold. Look for a June release.

**Markus Sigfridsson** is the composer and guitarist behind a great new metal band from Sweden called **7days** featuring ex-Candlemass vocalist **Thomas Vikstrom** on lead vocals. On their debut album they have done a great version of **Veni Domine**'s "Wisdom Calls." The album will be out on Rivel Records somewhere in 2006.





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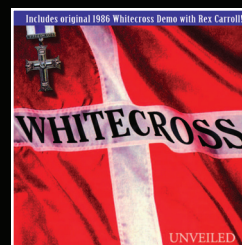
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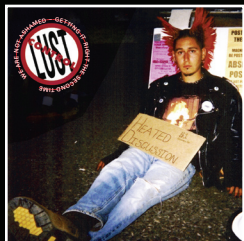
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**Six Feet Deep**  
*Struggle*



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featuring Rex Carroll



**Lust Control**  
*We Are Not Ashamed*  
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**L.S.U.**  
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**Circle of Dust**  
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**Circle of Dust**  
*Disengage*



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# DIVINEFIRE | POWER METAL

INTERVIEW BY STEVE ROWE



**Christian Rivel**

*I had the privilege of meeting Christian Rivel at The Revolution Metal Fest in Mexico City last year when we (Mortification) shared the stage with Narnia. Christian Rivel is a true man of God and we had a kinship from the first time we met. Both of us have the same strong heart to see people saved through Christian Metal evangelism. Read on and be inspired by the amazing music ministry of Christian Rivel and Divinefire.*

**Christian Rivel welcome to Heaven's Metal. Tell us how Divinefire came about and the reason for such a big time side project to Narnia.**

Thank you very much! I have been following Heaven's Metal since the 80's.

Since I formed the label Rivel Records and released more extreme metal bands like Sanctifica & Crimson Moonlight I always loved the speed and the energy of those bands. I wanted to create a band where the melodic & symphonic meets the extreme. I am very

happy how I can express my voice and faith with NARNIA but in NARNIA the extreme elements are not working.

That is the reason I have so many different bands/projects like AUDIOVISION, FLAGSHIP, DIVINEFIRE because I want them to be different and it is very developing to use your voice and music so different. For me as an artist and singer to have that freedom to release albums in different styles of music is very fortunate to have.

Regarding DIVINEFIRE try to get a picture of a metal musical/opera where the extreme and melodic elements meet each other. I also wanted to have very Jesus focused lyrics very Bible-oriented mixed with my own life as a Christian. When I received a demo from the band RENASCENT I was really touched by their extreme metal music and the lyrics because they were so Jesus focused. I have to call this band and their band leader Jani Stefanovic. To get this story short I never signed RENASCENT to my label but Jani Stefanovic was really into the ideas I have to mix the melodic elements with the extreme and DIVINEFIRE was born.

**Tell us about the members in the band. Which bands are they from and who is playing drums in the live shows?**

Jani Stefanovic – He has both Finnish and Swedish roots and speaks both languages. He is a multi instrumentalist and very talented. In DIVINEFIRE he is composing all the music and plays the drums, guitars, keyboards & sings growling vocals. He is also involved in ESSENCE OF SORROW & ETERNIUM and both these bands will have their debut albums out next year. When DIVINEFIRE is playing live Jani is playing the rhythm guitars & singing the growling vocals.

Andreas Olsson – The bassplayer in the band and my long time partner in NARNIA. Andreas also plays with ROB ROCK, VENI DOMINE and the handling the bass on recordings with 7DAYS & ESSENCE OF SORROW.

Christian Rivel – I am the vocalist and write all the vocal lines and the lyrics. I am also involved in NARNIA, FLAGSHIP & AUDIOVISION.

We are only three members in the band but we have three session players with us when we are performing live and these people are: Andreas Johansson the drummer in NARNIA & ROB ROCK; and Anders Berlin, who plays keyboards and have his own band called SHINE.

Patrik Gardberg – Lead guitars and he is a member in a band called AMMOTRACK.

**Divinefire has had some great success in Japan. Tell us how that came to be and the response to the recent shows in Japan.**

When we had done our promotional CD with 5 songs to present the band for record labels we got our first response from Japan and we signed with King Records in Japan. King Records is one of the oldest and biggest record companies in Japan. The response and



sales have been so great that we got the chance to tour there. I have been waiting for 16 years for this moment since God put Japan on my heart in 1989. The fans, media and our record label we have in Japan have been very dedicated and supportive to our style of metal. We are so happy that we got the chance to spread the news about Jesus in Japan.

**What has been the reaction in Europe and the rest of the world?**

We have got good reaction but it has been better in Japan. Our albums are released through German label Metal Heaven for the secular market in Europe and through my label Rivel Records for the Christian market. Right now we are working hard to get our albums more spread both in North & South America. I am now working close with Lance King at Nightmare Records for USA & Canada. Radrockers & Blastbeats have done a good work selling our albums in USA but of course we hope we will have a stronger fanbase in USA & Europe for the future. We have also alot of fans in South America but no deal is signed yet. It is really exciting to see what God is doing with DIVINEFIRE.

**It is evident that with Namia, Divinefire and Rivel Records that you have raised the bar for true Christian Metal in my humble opinion. Possibly higher than it has ever been raised before. Tell us about your passion for excellence and how it has been achieved.**

I have a lot of passion for hard rock, progressive rock and metal but most important I have a passion and a need to reach people in metal world with the Gospel about Jesus. He is my everything. I was frustrated that so few Christian bands got the chance to release albums so I formed my own label after being in the metal scene for 10 years. It hasn't been the easiest road to go but today I am very happy how God have led me through the years. Today it is more exciting then ever to spread the Gospel with metal music because this world is starving for Jesus. This is my way of giving out the good news and I try to use my talent as singer and as a record label owner as best as possible. I pray for wisdom by the Holy Spirit everyday to make the right steps.

**You have a passion for souls as I do. When I saw you perform at The Revolution Metal Fest In Mexico City last year the presense of The Holy Spirit was so powerful. Lives were changed and you did not even preach. Tell us about bringing the presense of The Holy Spirit into a show. To see this first hand I felt like all my 21 years of prayers were being answered.**

For me every time I go on stage it is a service where God is the center. When I perform on stage I pray during the whole show and I invite God to be a big part of my life and hopefully people see that God is the center and not me. I am just a tool and an open channel for the kingdom of God.



**Andreas Olsson**

I love to play metal to uplift the King of Kings.

**Divinefire and Rivel Records stands strongly for the Jesus message. How do you feel about the current trend in Christian Metal and Rock becoming less and less about salvation through Jesus? Many bands are focusing more on lyrics that can often not even be considered "Christian" although they may be positive?**

First, I was very frustrated to see this trend and it took a lot of energy and frustration but then I realized. We are all unique and I can only be Christian and if I want to see a movement for Christ in me and the metal scene it has to start with me. For me Jesus is everything and

*"After that show, it felt so great and it felt like a new band and we felt excited about the future."*



**Jani Stefanovic**

the bands I release on Rivel Records have a focus and a goal to reach people for Christ. I am naive in my faith and for God everything is possible. What I see in the Christian world today is that we limit God to a small part of our lives. God wants to be involved 100% of our lives. If you dare to go that way I am sure you will see how exciting it is to follow Jesus. In Christ we are strong!!!

**Where did the name Rivel Records come from? Why a personal name change on albums from Christian Liljegren to Christian Rivel?**

When I got married with Jannine in 2002 I picked my wife's last name because the name will die if not Jannine or her brother take the name further. I like the name a lot and Jannine's grandfather is one of the world most famous clowns called Charlie Rivel. Rivel is a stage name that he picked (please check the history books) It also sounded very good and I got the permission from Jannine's father Charlie Rivel JR to call my record label RIVEL RECORDS.

**How do you fit such a big successful side project with the commitments of your main band Narnia?**

Narnia will always be my main priority band and three of four Narnia members are touring members with Divinefire and Carl Johan Grimmark guitarist of NARNIA is also guesting on the albums. The communication is good and it will not be a problem in the future for recording and touring. Narnia goes first and as long it works I will continue with Divinefire, but we will not tour as much as Narnia. The same goes for Flagship & Audiovision, who are only recording bands.

**Do you find time to sleep? I know the stress of running a band and a label let alone a side project. How do you find the balance in God's calling on your life?**

Since 1st of September 2005 I am doing this fulltime and it is very relaxing that I can spend my focus only on music and the ministry. Of course sometimes it is really stressful but comparing when I worked besides the music it is a wonderful to finally make it fulltime. I sleep very well at least 7-8 hours a night and I need that to keep my voice in good condition. I also do alot of sports to keep my body – my temple of God in good shape. Every day I try to take time reading the Bible and pray to have a good start of the day. It makes me feel calm and it is great to leave every day into the hands of God.

**What is your dream and vision for your music?**

My vision is to see as many as possible receiving Jesus Christ into their lives and for me to get a deeper relationship with God everyday. The day I leave this world I want to be remembered as a man who lived a close relationship with Jesus. I hope that I got the chance to play all over the world and release more albums so more people get to know Jesus. I really want to tour in North & South America & Australia. I also want to go to Japan again with Divinefire & Narnia. I also want to show the world with my life and passion for metal that everything is possible if you let God be involved 100% of your time.

**Thank you, Christian, for giving your time for the readers of Heaven's Metal. Long Live The King, my Brother!**

Thank you very much for your support for Divinefire, Narnia and the bands on Rivel Records and I hope to see you all in Heaven. Receive Jesus Christ into your life today!!!

LONG LIVE THE KING







*Caspar*

# Caspar McCloud & the Ministry of Three



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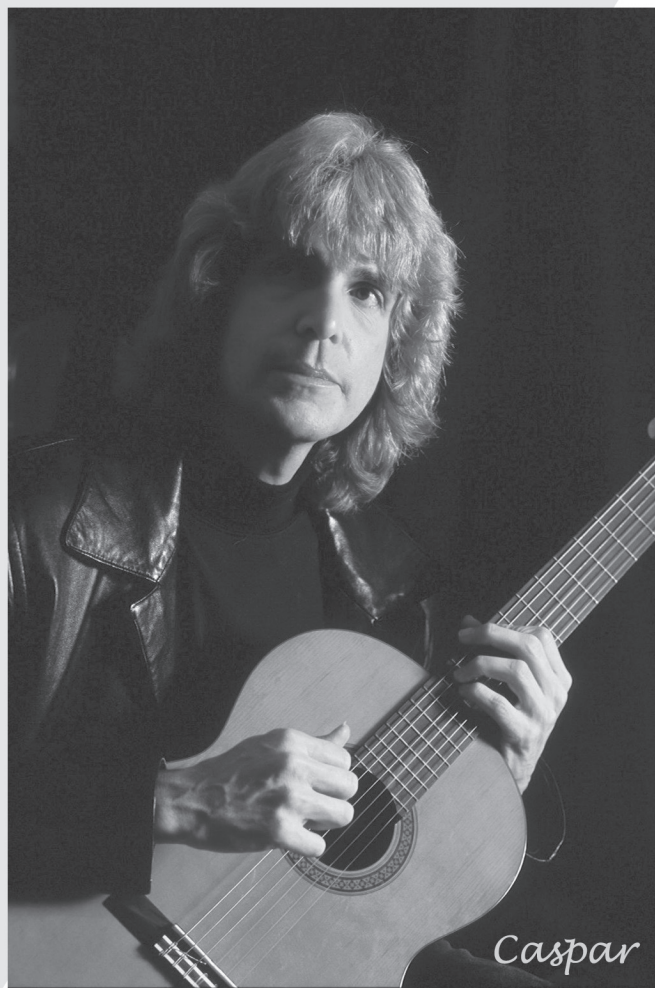
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## Neal Morse

INTERVIEW BY CHRIS BECK

*How many of us, if we were at the top of our profession, would quit what we were doing and choose to do something else? Be honest, it would be very hard to remove yourself from something that you've worked so hard to attain, especially when there are no guarantees that you would be successful at whatever it is you do next. That is exactly what Neal Morse did a few years ago. On faith, he left Spock's Beard, one of the best, if not the best, progressive rock bands at the time. Leaving behind the band's success as defined by the world's standards Neal heeded God's calling and pursued a solo career. Having just released his third solo album since leaving the band, it seems that things have turned out well. We recently caught up with Neal to discuss the new album and to reflect back on his music career.*

**Chris Beck: Your new album just came out. Why don't you go ahead and tell us a little bit about it, specifically the writing and recording process.**

Neal Morse: Well, let's see, the writing and record-

ing process. It all started with a visit from a friend. He dropped by about December of last year, so almost a year ago he stopped by the house. He said, "Hey, I've been praying and I felt like the Lord laid it on my heart to come over here and talk to you about this idea that I have about doing a rock concept album about the tabernacle in the wilderness." And so I said, "I don't really want to do another concept album."

**Your first two solo albums are concept albums, after all.**

Yeah, *Testimony* and *One*, but he was really excited about it and he was like, "Yeah, make it mysterious. *Testimony* and *One* are good, but it would be really cool ... it's more intriguing to people if you veil it. You know, the way the Old Testament veils its ... all this symbolism, but it's kind of hidden and you really have to search it out. See if you can get people interested in searching things out."

The whole thing about this album, it originally was called *My Secret Project* and that was all inspired by my friend, Paul. I didn't think I was really going to do it. At the time that we had that conversation, he said, "Yeah, next time try this. Next time you're talking to somebody and they ask you what you're working on next, tell them 'it's a secret and just watch what happens.'" I was like, "Oh man, that's not going to work." But the next time I was doing the interview, I had kind of forgotten about it – it was about three weeks later, and it just kind of came out of my mouth, "Oh, it's a secret, you know," and the guy stopped and said, "Oh, I'm intrigued." And so then I became committed, once I said that, I was like, "Well, I better come up with something really good." And then I feel like the Lord really helped me. It was several months later – I didn't write a note to him for months after that and there was already sort of a little bit of a buzz happening about what is Neal's secret proj-



ect. And so I just began to feel like it was right, it was the right thing, so then I wrote the whole thing in about ten days. I came back from Europe last February and just began to really write it in earnest. I sat there with the tape recorder at my piano, really, and just wrote the whole thing. Then we recorded it – we did the basic tracking at the end of May, so between February and May was the writing and the demo phase. I demoed the whole thing and sent it to Mike and Randy to see what they thought, and then they came out and then they put their two cents, or ten cents, in. And then I finished the album by the end of July.

**It is interesting, the concept of the tabernacle. It seems like a fairly specific concept to base an album on. You do a very good job of relating the temple or the tabernacle to us as Christians by the end of the album, but do you feel it has turned out well – the message that you wanted to convey on the album?**

Well, I think if you really dig, if people will really dig into those Scriptures that I put in the booklet, and really hook into all those things, there's a lot of ... there's some real deep stuff in there. I mean, not of mine. I'm not, like, bragging or anything, but there's some... I think there's some pretty meaty...

You know, Paul talks about how, 'I fed you with milk, because you couldn't stand the meat.' I think there's some meat for people if they're hungry for meat. There's some hidden in that album, there's some pretty juicy stuff.

**How exactly do you pronounce the album title? Is it "The Question" or "Question Mark?"**

I call it *Question Mark*.

**Why did you decide to name it *Question Mark* as opposed to some of the other titles you had mentioned?**

Well, it was all about this searching out thing. I wanted people to search it out for themselves. I think it's much more powerful when you discover something for yourself, rather than if somebody just gives you something or tells you about something. If you feel like you really discovered it, it's a lot more powerful.

**Now, as we just mentioned, this is your third main solo album, all of which have been concept albums. Can we maybe expect a non-concept album in the future? Do you like to write that way generally?**

Well, I guess I do now. I didn't before. I really have

resisted it in the older days. Back in the old days of Spock's Beard, people I remember were saying, 'You guys need to do a big concept record. I mean, come on, you're a prog band, what's the deal?' So we finally did one, you know, with *Snow* and then I guess I couldn't get it out of my system, because I have not made a regular progressive rock album – that wasn't a concept album – since the year 2000 or so.

**On *Question Mark*, you do have a couple songs on there that are a little bit heavier. I noticed, specifically, "In The Fire" and "Solid as the Sun." There are some riffs on there that are pretty heavy. Is that something that you set out to do with this album, or did that just happen in the writing process?**

It just kind of happened. It happens in the recording process a lot of times, because, like, I got this really good amp. I borrowed this really good guitar. When you can get those sounds, and they sound really good, you want to turn them up. And a lot of times in the past my guitar sounds just weren't that good, so I didn't really want to turn them up that much.

*Continued on page 18*

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Photo by BJ Papas

## What Fireball Ministry Says...

So, I talked to Jim Rota of Fireball Ministry. I decided to start off with some fun.

**Okay, so which band is better: AC/DC, Aerosmith, or Led Zeppelin? And Why?**

To me? I'd would have to go with AC/DC, because they're the most accessible to everybody, 'cause everybody likes to party and AC/DC is the universal band that no matter where you're at or what you're doing, you could throw it on. And also, AC/DC really hasn't changed too much from the band they were when they started to now. So even, running the gamut I think, you're going to win with AC/DC.

**Alright. The Cult or Motorhead, either band in their prime, which is better and why?**

Umm, Motorhead. Motorhead is just... I think Motorhead is still in their prime. Again, they're totally timeless. There just ah... Motorhead's like the coolest big kid on the block, you know? They're just like your friend's older brother, who is the most bad-(bleep) guy you've ever seen in your whole life.

**Alright. When do you have the most time or**

**find yourself watching the audience more – during the instrumental section or vocal section?**

Uhh, you know, it's really hard to see the audience most times, because the lights are usually really bright; but I do a lot of sweating, so my eyes are usually stinging from that, so I've got to say that there's only probably, like, a couple times in the show where there's maybe a flash of the lights when they go down that I actually get to look at a face. (laughs)

**Fireball Ministry. *Their Rock Is Not Our Rock. The Second Great Awakening.* "King." All these names are rich with biblical imagery. What's the thought behind any of that?**

Uhh, I think that music to us is like a religion. So when we started the band we were kinda like, you know, this is something we all take very seriously and, uh, we're gonna never put something or write something that doesn't hold as much weight to us as maybe the Bible does to other people. And I think that pretty much says it. What we do is our religion.

**What do you think of Jesus Christ?**

I think he's alright. I don't have any problem with

him.

**What do you think about His claims to be, quote, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except but by Me?"**

Uh, I don't know. I think that a lot of people have a lot of opinions in the world and, uh, I think that I'm not much of a person that talks about this kind of stuff in press. So, I don't know what to tell you. I usually try to keep the political and religious views to myself, because when all is said and done, a guy playing in a band shouldn't be the one influencing your decisions in those areas.

**There's a lot to be said for that.**  
Yeah.

**Not a lot of those musicians out there took that advice during the past election, though.**

Yeah, and I think it's irresponsible, personally. I think that if you want to have a public voice about political issues, then you should do what everyone else would do – and that's run for office, not play guitar.

**Describe the best show you ever played and what made it great or memorable?**



They're all pretty great. I mean – honest to God – every show has its moments. A lot of shows have their moments where you think, '(Bleep), this crowd is really up to speed and whatever, and then it kind of just kicks you into high gear and really makes you work the crowd more and more and more and more. So, by the end, you really *do* feel like you've got 'em somewhere. So, I'd say every show pretty much is our best show.

**Describe the greatest performance you've ever seen by another band.**

I'd have to say in that, in some ways, the AC/DC tour – the *Stiff Upper Lip* tour was probably the most epiphanal show I'd seen. We drove out to see AC/DC play – as I've done for the last hundred tours they've done. You watch them play and you find that they wrote the book; and the fact that they are, you know, they just seemed like they were just on tour to show everybody like, 'Yeah, this is how it's done. Why don't you all go home and cry?'

**Tell me about the writing and recording process of *Their Rock Is Not Our Rock*. What highlights stand out to you, and why?**

Well, like every record that we've always done, it was definitely, 'Hurry up and get it finished,' because it's time and money; so we usually work pretty well under those circumstances. Basically, as a band we took the songs into the studio with Nick, our producer, and we sat in a room for two weeks, beating the songs into shape and then we just went in and recorded how we recorded everything else – in about, I don't know, two weeks. Then Nick mixed it and then it went out. It's more like we come to Nick with these blobs of songs and Nick kind of shaped them into actual solid sculptures. Yeah, it was a lot of fun and I'm really, really happy with the way it turned out.

**Cool. I've got a two-part question. How does it feel when you guys work up a powerful, great riff, like "Sundown" or "It Flies Again?" And what feels better – the first time it reverberates in its finished form in the rehearsal room? Or at a good show where the audience is moving to it?**

I think it's more the first time in the studio when the song is done and you hear it blasting through the monitors in its completed form. I think that's definitely a huge rush and very satisfying. But also, equally as satisfying is playing in front of a crowd and having them react to it and get pumped about it; because there really is no feeling better than, you know, a good crowd and the live show. I know it's why bands endure what they endure on the road, year after year – because that feeling is unmatched by any.

**Yeah, that's pretty cool. That's probably the closest that rock n roll gets to religion ... in kind of referring back to the original parallel.**

Oh, I agree. I mean, like doing something to get that rise. I mean, anybody who gets up in front of a group of people and gets a rise out of them, does it in large part to do that, you know? Got to be!

**So, if you were predicting the musical future, where would you put the following styles? And I'll list off a style and let you comment.**

Okay.

**Emo/Screamo.**

Like, what kind of band is that?

**All the bands with days of the week in their names, Taking Back Sunday, Thursday.**

Oh, I don't know. I mean, that stuff seems to have a market; but again, the trend always seems to be, like, when you sign enough bands that sound exactly the same, then all of a sudden kids become disinterested in it. For me personally, that's what I think. I think that a band that sounds like their own thing is definitely the band that is going to have the longest career.

**Okay. Hardcore punk.**

Which bands are those?

**Oh gosh, it can vary between, like, Hatebreed and No Innocent Victim.**

I think it's the same thing, you know? Like the bands that have their own sound will be the ones that have longer careers, but a lot of labels have signed a lot of those kind of bands – that sound exactly the same, even down

to the singing. That's what makes no sense to me. Like when your singer sounds like thirty other singers. I don't see how your band could really, like, stay. Like all those bands can't be popular for very long.

**Classic metal, like Iron Maiden or Priest.**

That (bleep) never goes away. They tried to make it go away in the 90's. All that happened were bands like Hammerfall sprung up and At The Gates. You know? It's like they tried to make it go away and it won't go away. (laughs) Thank God.

**How about hard blues-based rock, like what Fireball Ministry does?**

I don't know. I mean, I definitely think our band is timeless; but I don't think that we are safe as ... let's say we had a huge hit and all of a sudden labels were signing four hundred bands just like us. I think we'd have the same fate as everyone else, but hopefully there's something about our band that (they) find to be unique and, you know, something they want to be a part of; so, we'll keep doing it as long as people want us to.

**What's the next big musical fad that'll hit big?**

I think that, in a beautiful way, the world of music is now opened up to people like it never was before – with the internet – where you can find out about things. The serious music fan is going to be finding out about stuff months before the major labels do or the major market does. And by the time it gets to the major market, it's probably already gonna be gone. I think that there really hasn't been the next big thing. Since Nirvana and the whole Seattle movement in the 90's... Everything's just kind of been a sub-movement. You know what I mean? It's weird. It's hard to predict, because kids get in and out of stuff so fast that, who the heck knows?

**Sandra Bullock or Julia Roberts? Why?**

Neither. Sophia Loren. (laughs)

**Classic. Question you've always wanted to be asked by a music journalist?**

Um. A dorky one or a cool one?

**Both.**

Uh, the dorky one: I really love when an interviewer asks me what gear I use, cause I like talking about the gear. (laughs) It's a pretty big part of what I do and I'm pretty proud of the sound that I get. So, that's really one. And a cool one? Can't think of one. I can tell you interviews that I thought were great and, to be honest, this is definitely one. You have great questions.

**Cool. What's an essential piece of gear you couldn't live without?**

On the road?

**Yeah.**

My Dean guitars. There's no way to get on a stage without a Dean guitar.

**Why a Dean versus a Charvelle or a Fender or Les Paul or something?**

Cause Dean is like... Dean is the guitar company that, first of all, listens to who plays their instruments. And second of all, I say there's Fender and Gibson and then there's Dean and everybody knows about Fender and Gibson; but they also know about Dean in the back of their mind. And when you say that you play a Dean, they're like, 'Ahh.' Everyone always has that reaction like, 'Yeah, that's Dean.' (laughs)

**Anything else you'd like to add?**

Ah, just come out and see the CKY tour and come out and see the HIM tour. We're going to be out a long, long, long, long time for you people.

**Wow. Some good bands, too.**

Yeah, yeah.



# ALBUM REVIEWS



## ALETHEIAN

LIVE (DVD)

The first DVD from Aletheian is packed full of music, featuring 3 different concerts, a video and some nifty bonus features, clocking in with over two hours of death metal mayhem. The video is for their song "As the Fall Breaks" and is pretty good. This looks like it was shot on a digital camera, and some of the syncing is slightly off. The DVD video shoot concert is great. 30 minutes of head banging, sweat and great death metal. They definitely invested a bit into this concert footage, as they also spent the time and money recording the performance as well and having that mastered. So the sound quality is great. If you haven't seen these guys and want to, or if you have and loved the show, then this DVD is well worth the investment. The other two concerts included are a bit less quality on both the picture and the sound, but the concerts are great. They feature multiple camera angles and are edited quite nicely. Add in the special features and this is really a pretty good package.

[Hope Prevails] Mike Larson



## WHITECROSS

NINETEEN EIGHTY SEVEN

Whitecross' self-titled debut is considered by most to be a classic. It has always been one of my favorites, so I was excited to hear that Scott Wenzel and Rex Carroll were getting together to re-record the entire album. Other bands have tried this in the past, unsuccessfully, but Whitecross got it right with *Nineteen Eighty Seven*! The guitars are bigger and the production is better; it's like listening to these old songs for the first time. Not all has improved, however, as Scott's vocals occasionally lack the power and emotion from the original, most notably on "Who Will You Follow." Still, this is a minor complaint for an album that is a lot of fun to listen to. All Christian metal fans should add this re-recorded classic to their collection. [Girder] Chris Beck



## WAR MACHINE

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Fantastic power metal of the classic variety. All the necessary ingredients are here: heavy drumming, good lead and background vocals (very melodic, but not over the top), and great guitar melodies and leads. The musicianship and songwriting are just brilliant. To succeed at this style in 2005 requires precision and not making any mistakes. This album could be near perfect. The only thing missing from this apocalyptic imagery and the lyrical construct based on a biblical worldview is the bold offer of hope in Jesus. [Nightmare] Doug Van Pelt



## LO-RUHAMAH

S/T

Unbridled energy and shrill black countered and mixed with death metal vocals and incredibly tight blast beats make this an amazing release. This young band's first release makes the idea of growth really scary (and terribly exciting). Look for a full-length in 2006. [Bombworks] DVP



## ILLUMINANDI

THE BEGINNING...

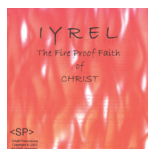
This band from Poland fills up their musical canvas with keys, violins, cello, bass, drums, guitars, along with female and male vocals. Somewhat slow, doomy, and plodding, it's pretty powerful. The lead-off track ("Who Will Set Me Free?") has lyrics printed in English, but I could swear it's Polish. The theatrical "...So We..." features a call/response vocal approach somewhat likened to Bloodgood's "Crucify," only again sung / growled in Polish. This 15-track CD includes their 2000 demo, their 2002 demo, and 8 live tracks – all of decent sonic quality. Both the live and demo versions of "The Cup" are reminiscent of Believer's opera/thrash experiments, with its speedy violin and guitar work. [Bombworks] DVP



## THE SOUL'S UNREST

S/T

Nice and tight death and thrashing metal. Solid production. Stopping-on-a-dime tight musicianship, shown off with speedy bursts of dynamic climbing and falling riffs, almost classic metal in its structure. This is the sorta tough-guy music that could move a hardcore crowd (like Sinai Beach, Nodes of Ranvier), but technically proficient in an Aletheian sorta way. Not the fastest playing, but just darn tight, good, and heavy. [Bombworks] DVP



## IYREL

THE FIRE PROOF FAITH OF CHRIST

This mostly instrumental guitar album has some fine tones and creative playing. Worshipful titles, like "More Joy in Christ" and "Testimony" show a talented guitarist anxious to share his faith and six-string skills. Keith Ostendorf is the solo artist on display here, which is fairly varied with more melody than, say speedy shredding, but the few vocal tracks are slightly less appealing. [Small Productions] DVP



## VENIA

IN OUR WEAKNESS

This Finnish band brings the complete package; where artwork conveys the sound and lyrical direction well. "Kaipuu" is a long, sweeping instrumental intro with beautiful vocals from violinist Veronica Fagerlund. While not as shrill and gothic as, say, Virgin Black, this dynamic band mixes punk rock energy ("Illusion") with dark, gothic textures (without using keyboards) and straight-up rockin' metal (and sometimes in the same song, like "The Path"). The guitars and tones never disappoint, but some of the vocal melodies and songwriting gets predictable. [Bombworks] DVP





### H.J. KAEMERER

#### NICOLAS THE LEGEND (BOOK)

You may not recognize the name, as the lead vocalist of Saint has always spelled his name in a simpler fashion, but he has been very busy in the past year - playing Saint songs in Germany and penning this novel and recording a dramatic reading of it. Utilizing various voices (children and adult characters with full sound effects), he weaves a delightful story about the man called St. Nick. [Indie] DVP



### EVROKLIDON

#### THE FLAME OF SODOM

Six songs here blaze a black metal trail of brilliant teeth-baring aggression and intensity. Another two-man project, these guys from the Ukraine dish out some really solid metal. You'll be glad to know that one of the two musicians is a drummer (no drum machines here!), as the blast beats and pounding from Rain (Vadim Fed'ko) is extremely tight. Artaaroth (Artyom Stupak) handles the vocals, guitar and bass. Spaceba, komrades! [Bombworks] DVP



### TOTALISTI

#### SLAVE TO NONE

Ultimately the lack of melody deals the death blow to this record. Predictable riffs and breakdowns don't stand out, but rather blend through each song, making the songs sound stuck on repeat. It doesn't help that they sound like a compilation of every nu-metal band out there either. [Magna Carta] Sam Farries



### F5

#### A DRUG FOR ALL SEASONS

It's quite a shock that Dave Ellefson's first band project post-Megadeth is so melodic; but it should come as no surprise that the riffage here is thick, solid, and as mean as a copperhead. While cer-

tainly original, I'm reminded of the marriage of melody and riffs that Sevendust crank out. Superb sonic soundscapes drape each song in a fullness that spells professionalism. Many of the lyrics are about drug abuse ("Medicating isn't meditation"), and you can sense a Christian worldview overlooking and supporting the songs, but nothing's too obvious or spelled out. Their cover of Edie Brickell's "What I Am" is fun. [Indie] DVP



### TAKETH

#### FREAKSHOW

\*\*sigh\*\* Nothing new here.

Though the music isn't bad, the death/metalcore songs on this album don't offer anything creative or memorable. The production is average at best. While bands like Becoming the Archtype have progressed this musical genre, Taketh is stuck in the morass of insipid "modern" metal. [Fear Dark] Chris Beck



### AMOS

#### A MATTER OF TIME

Precision classic metal played with skill by the talented duo of Rodrigo Shimabukuro (bass/vocals) and Evandro Leite (guitars). Blazing fast and clean scales soar underneath mid-range power metal vocals akin to Helloween, early Leviticus, and dozens of others. [Bombworks] DVP



### IMMORTAL SOULS

#### ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE NORTH

This is a beautifully packaged double CD digipak containing the album *Under the Northern Sky* and remastered songs from the band's demos and EPs, including all of the songs from the fantastic but hard to find *Divine Wintertime* EP. There are also two new songs, both of which are very good. One song has the traditional melodic death metal sound of Immortal Souls, while the other song has a heavy blues influence. If you are a fan of Immortal Souls or you have

been looking for a reason to get into their music, this value-priced CD set is sure to please. [Fear Dark] Chris Beck



### DBEALITY

#### S/T

Sounds like these guys have been around the block a time or two as they blend low chunky riffs with thunder clap beats to perfection. No excessive noodling is found here, but each guitar solo is well placed and serves the whole of the song. If that's not enough to kickstart your rock star fantasies, Ozzy-esque vocals help complete the transition. But those that remember David Benson take note, the Ozzification of his vocals are less dominant than previous releases. [Indie] Sam Farries



### WALK THE SKY

#### S/T

Get past the plain CD insert, because the disc is worth a look. The music is complimented by the band's many melodic harmonies, and Rob's strong, clear vocal delivery. WTS demonstrates versatility playing soft rock/blues/hard rock/metal. "Don't You Know What Love Is" is a well-done cover from obscure secular band Touch. However, "Touched By You" was a disappointment that doesn't belong on this album of well-done unpredictable tunes. The blues intro was good, but it doesn't fit Rob's vocal range, and it is musically bland. [Indie] Diane Crider



### NEAL MORSE

#### ?

Neal's latest album is another progressive rock masterpiece. Heavier and less orchestral than past efforts, fans will love this concept album due to the mysterious yet meaningful lyrics, professional musicianship and high quality production. [Radiant] Chris Beck

## Neal Morse cont'd

**On *Question Mark*, you brought in, as you typically have, studio musicians like Mike Portnoy, or Phil Keaggy and Kerry Livgren in the past as well. Is this the way you like to work? Do you ever see yourself having a full time band?**

I don't know. That's something to pray about, really. In each step I kind of just, you know, I take the next step that feels right. It's an interesting possibility. I haven't really thought about having a regular band, because I don't really have that much for them to do. It's not like I'm a big touring guy.

**Well, do you have any plans to tour with this album?**

We don't have a plan. For one, you know, that's another thing I'm praying about. I'd like to avoid doing the standard music business thing. I don't want to do things because that's the way generally people do it. I want to do things that are of God, and inspired by Him, so I'm just kind of waiting on the Lord about that touring thing. I'd love to, but, you know, I don't want to do it unless He's in it.

**We mentioned *Spock's Beard*. There are some people that would say that you left that band kind of at its peak of popularity and success. How do you feel about that?**

Yeah, I guess it was. It was growing all the time a little bit. You know, a little bit every year. It seemed like it was and, you know, it's a disappointing thing business-wise for all of us, you know? I mean, I'd like to be selling.. It's nice to sell a lot of records and I don't sell as much records as I did then, and they don't either. But, you know, I'm not about sales or I would have stayed there.

**So, do you have any regrets at all about leaving the band or maybe some regrets about things that happened when you left the band?**

No, not really. I feel like it was right and it was the right time and God knew, and He led me every step of the way. I mean every step of the way. Even when I went – when I flew out there, the morning I was flying out there to tell them, I had no idea how it was going to happen. I was just praying, “God, how am I going to tell them?” You know, in a restaurant or something? The place where we normally record was one big room. I didn't want to tell them in front of, like, the engineer and stuff. You know, we had to be alone. So anyways, the last minute the studio we always, *always* recorded in was booked, and so Nick said, “Oh, well, there's this other place I've been wanting to try, this friend of mine has.” So, the bottom line is I get there, and this place has a separate upper room lounge. I saw it, and I just went, “Oh, wow.”

**Perfect setting.**

I really felt like the Lord was just leading all the way, you know, in every facet of it.

**Did it come as a shock to the band at the time?**

Yeah. I mean, it was a shock to me, too, in a way. I mean, although I had many months to pray about it and, you know, grieve about it and everything before that, it's still like... I don't know if you've ever had that kind of experience where you're...

**Where the Lord's called you to do something or lead you to do something and you're not sure if you want to do it?**

Well...I don't know if it's a matter of your want, if you're feeling His desire, but you're still wondering if you're really going to go through with it.

**Yet you take the comfort that you know you're doing the right thing, because that's what He wants you to do.**

Yeah, but you're still not sure the whole time whether you're really going to do it or not, maybe something will happen, and it will, you know, change at the last minute or maybe you'll chicken out. Up until the last minute I was still

thinking, 'Am I really going to do this?'

**Unfortunately, flesh often, I guess wins more often than it should, right?**  
Yeah, sometimes.

**Well, I guess after you left *Spock's Beard*, your first major solo album was *Testimony*, which is kind of your life story from your early days to your conversion to Christianity. Knowing that people would be listening to that throughout the years over and over, how hard was it to write that album?**

Oh, well, that was a real joy. I mean, I'd been struggling, one of the struggles in writing *Snow* was how do I take all this stuff that's in my heart and veil it so that nobody knows it's overtly a Christian album? You know, how do I take “Love Beyond Words” and “Wind at My Back” and how can we make this a *Spock's Beard* album? And so there were times when it was a little bit frustrating, because I couldn't just say what I wanted to say. So in *Testimony*, I really just said what I wanted to say purely and I really felt again like it was just a real gift from God to be able to do that and the way that it all poured out – what a gift it was. I'm just grateful to the Lord that He blessed me. Just the experience of writing that album was wonderful.

**Sounds great. It's interesting you talk about veiling the lyrics on *Snow*. I've wondered, you've obviously gained many new fans with your solo work, yet I'm sure a lot of your fans are from the base from your Transatlantic or *Spock's Beard* days. Your lyrics are now quite bold. The message is very... I mean, there's hidden messages in there, as you say, but there's also very blatant messages. How have those fans, some of your older fans if you will, reacted to your current lyrics?**

Well, surprisingly, a lot of them were really very into it. There's a lot of people that are, they'll even say, “I'm not a Christian, and I'm not generally, I don't like Christian music, but I'm really into this,” and so it's amazing, you know, really how great everybody's been.

**Well, I think Christian music as a whole is improving, but I think that people hear limited pieces of it and they get the feeling, 'Gee, this isn't the same quality that I might hear on the radio or that I'm generally listening to,' so that might be part of their reaction, because your music tends to be of a higher quality, but in a limited sub-genre of Christian music. How do you view now the prog rock sub-genre of Christian music? Is it growing?**

Yeah, it's growing, it sure is. You know, I always say, “I'm just grateful that there is any kind of...” I was grateful in the olden days that there was, when people say, “Well, what do you think of the prog rock scene?” I'm just glad that it exists. I spent so many years just floundering around with no audience, you know, I'm just always grateful if anybody cares anywhere, so I think it's wonderful that there's people that are really enthusiastic about what I'm doing. There's other people that are doing it, that are doing some really good things. I think Randy George's band Ajalon, Carl Groves' Salem Hill has some very good things, Glass Hammer has some good Christian-oriented things and, of course, Kerry Livgren's stuff is great. I'm probably forgetting some, but you know, there's some people doing some really good work out there, so it's encouraging.

**Neal, any last words for the readers of *Heaven's Metal*?**

Well, God bless you all. Praise the Lord with your life. You'll be glad. It's good. It's the best life you can live.





# ALBUM REVIEWS



## SHINING STAR

### ENTER ETERNITY

Shining Star's follow-up to *Fatal Mistake* is an album full of slow-paced, slightly-progressive melodic hard rock, and what a great album it is! Lance King provides his best vocal performance to date, reminiscent of his work on Balance of Power's *Perfect Balance*. The rhythm and lead guitar playing by Fabio Rocha is excellent, though not overly complex. The album's production is near-perfect, again reminding me of *Perfect Balance*. Standout tracks include "Insomnia" and "Lady of the Night," both of which are borderline power ballads, seemingly a lost art these days. This album is highly recommended and should appear on several "best of the year" Christian heavy metal lists. [Nightmare] Chris Beck



## AVIAN

### FROM THE DEPTHS OF TIME

Lance King is a busy man. In addition to other recent projects, Lance is the singer and producer of *From the Depths of Time*, a mid-tempo power metal album. Lance's vocals are less varied here, rarely straying into the highs and lows we typically hear from him. Yan Leviathan's guitar work is solid throughout. The production of the album, however, isn't very crisp. A good album that many will enjoy, but I can't help thinking it could have been better. [Nightmare] Chris Beck



## CERIMONIAL SACRED

### OUR WAR IS ONLY AGAINST HELL

An impressive debut by these Brazilian black metal warriors, *Our War is Only Against Hell* showcases Cerimonial Sacred as one of the great promises emerging from the South American scene. Combining the sorrowful atmosphere of Antestor with the ferocity and – at times – the syncopated vocal style made famous by Dani Filth of Cradle of Filth's fame (which is especially clear in the track "A Song for the Immortals"), the band shows enough talent to position themselves as one of the best new bands of 2005. Despite the short length of the CD and the (often) distracting grammatical errors that permeate the lyrical content, I wholeheartedly recommend it. [Extreme] Ed Hellig



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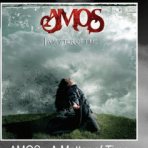


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AMOS - A Matter of Time  
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extreme gothic metal with heavy use of strings



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atmospheric, epic black metal



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# THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

By Steve Rowe

## ORIGINALITY

I hope it is okay with you guys to use mainstream examples, because the point is best illustrated this way. What do Kiss, Motley Crue, Motorhead, Metallica, Napalm Death and System of a Down all have in common? Originality! They all created a new look and a new sound when they started and they are all still very popular acts.

Originality in music is always more important than musicianship when it comes to standing out in the crowd – something not easy to achieve these days. In Germany alone there are one hundred and twenty new Metal style album releases every month. Most of these are by copy bands. So why would someone buy a new Grind band who sounds like a B-grade version of Napalm if the new Napalm album is in the new releases? You can't better the original, so why copy it?

What do all the above bands also have in common? None have the world's greatest musicians in them. They are not bands of hugely talented individuals, but innovative groups who together make up their own great sound and image. A team of champions cannot beat a champion team.

So, what is the point here? I see too much copycat music in Christian Rock and Metal, and not enough originality. Why copy something that some god-less band invented ten years ago? Christians making art who come to mind as examples of originality are very few. Maybe P.O.D., Stryper, and King's X – all being hugely successful in their own right in the mainstream of music.

As Christians, we need to be pre-contemporary. Usually, all Christian music or art ever can only be viewed as a rehash of what has already been done by successful mainstream acts. If we truly want to reach the world for Christ, we need to be innovators, not imitators. Even combining a hybrid of styles can be original. This is what makes P.O.D. so special.



If we are to change the world for Jesus, we need new and fresh ideas. Wouldn't it be great to see a real Jesus-focused band become the next Metallica?! Imagine the salvations that would follow!! I am praying for the band that is about to create that new sound that has the message and will have the privilege of seeing millions won to Jesus.

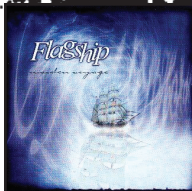
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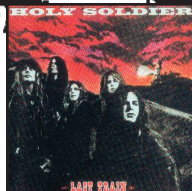
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# SOUND ADVICE

By Pastor Bob

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

I remember the first time I heard Janis Joplin on the radio. It was 1968. I was driving my Chevy II Nova (racing stripes, jacked-up rear end) down a familiar stretch of road. I even remember the exact spot. That incredible voice singing, "... take another little piece of my heart out, baby..." I will never forget it. It wasn't long before I had the album, the poster, and concert tickets. Today, when I hear her voice, it still brings back a flood of memories.

I'm sure we all have our favorites. And for most of us, there are emotions connected with the songs we love. The landmarks of our lives are usually marked by the songs that move us.

I was watching a show on VH1 the other night called, *Where Are They Now?* The purpose of the show, of course, was to find out where once popular rock stars are now. A familiar thread ran through most of the artists presented: drugs, failed marriages, and poverty.

I started thinking about Christian music, and realized that the same thing is true. Where are they now? Many are still following the Lord – but TOO MANY are not. Drug use, divorce, mental problems ... one popular Christian music figure even decided that it was okay for him to have more than one wife!

A friend was telling me recently about a reunion concert with a popular Christian band. They had to actually hire a bodyguard to fly with the old singer of the band, and to stay with him every minute until he went on stage. They knew his drug use was extreme, and they didn't trust him to be alone.

Through 35 years of being on the "inside" of most of the Christian music industry, I have seen a lot of fallout. When the gigs disappear, and the bands

break up, it seems that many don't continue with the Lord. Why?

I think the answer is simple. They fell in love with the music and the movement, and not with Jesus Christ. Oh, I realize our lives are complex. There are serious problems many have had to face that have left deep emotional scars. But when the going gets tough, we have a choice to either run TO our Savior or run FROM Him. The greatest joy of my life has been in knowing to whom I can run!

Edward Mote wrote this wonderful Hymn in 1834. His insight reminds us of our hope and our refuge...

*My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly trust in Jesus' Name.*

*On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand;  
all other ground is sinking sand.*

*When darkness seems to hide His face, I rest on His unchanging grace.  
In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil.*

*His oath, His covenant, His blood, support me in the overwhelming flood.  
When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my Hope and Stay.*

*When He shall come with trumpet sound, oh may I then in Him be found.  
Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.*

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### FLAGSHIP - MAIDEN VOYAGE

RRCD023

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### DIVINEFIRE - HERO

RRCD025

Here comes the 2nd album HERO the follow up to the very successful debut album GLORY THY NAME. They have just arrived from a successful tour in Japan where the new album HERO have received fantastic response. With this album DIVINEFIRE establish themselves in the metal scene and continue their own style of metal where the melodic meets the extreme. They have also done a great version of QUEEN'S big classic THE SHOW MUST GO ON. The fans have already found their fast and heavy favourites on this album like SECRET WEAPON, LEAVING THE SHADOWS, HERO & the sing along song and the band's anthem called DIVINEFIRE!



### MAJESTIC VANGUARD -

BEYOND THE MOON - RRCD024

Here comes MAJESTIC VANGUARD a new melodic metal act from Sweden. Their debut album BEYOND THE MOON will attract a lot of fans who love bands like ROB ROCK, NARNIA, HELLOWEEN, EDGUY & KAMELOT. The production is sharp and very powerful and full of melodies. MAJESTIC VANGUARD know how to deliver melodic metal to the people with catchy songs and choruses that go straight to the heart. MAJESTIC VANGUARD will take you BEYOND THE MOON with their metal music!



### AUDIOVISION - THE CALLING

RRCD019

Christian Rivel the vocalist of NARNIA & DIVINEFIRE have made an ALLSTAR album called THE CALLING. CHRISTIAN shows his trademark with strong melodies and good songs packed into a great production produced by LARS CHRISS (LION'S SHARE). On this album you can find hardrock and heavy metal heroes like Bruce Kulick (KISS), Tony Franklin (WHITESNAKE), Jeff Scott Soto (TALISMAN & MALMSTEEN'S RISING FORCE), Mats Levén (AT VANCE & THERION) Mic Michaeli (EUROPE), Mattias "IA" Eklundh (FREAK KITCHEN) and many more. This album is a masterpiece of melodic hard rock & metal that you will play over and over again!



### DIVINEFIRE - GLORY THY NAME

RRCD020

This band started in early 2004 by a phone conversation between Jani Stefanovic (RENASCENT, AM I BLOOD & SINS OF OMISION) & Christian Rivel (NARNIA). A month later they have written the debut album GLORY THY NAME. What you will hear is the perfect combination of melodic and symphonic metal meets the extreme metal. Imagine a mix of bands like RHAPSODY, DRAGONFORCE meets CHILDREN OF BODOM & TESTAMENT and you got the picture. Songs like NEVER SURRENDER, THE SIGN & THE WORLD'S ON FIRE will explode in your head when you hear the metal from DIVINEFIRE.



### CRIMSON MOONLIGHT

- VEIL OF REMEMBRANCE - RRCD022

CRIMSON MOONLIGHT from Sweden have been around since 1998 and they have built up a strong fansbase in the extreme metal scene. With their new album VEIL OF REMEMBRANCE they show the world that they are one of the best extreme metal bands around today. Their previous album THE COVENANT PROGRESS received great response both from press and fans but with VEIL OF REMEMBRANCE they have reached a higher level. You will be knocked when you hear the energy from these guys. If you want to have one really explosive and extreme metal album in your collection - This is the one! Fasten your seatbelts and join the ride with CRIMSON MOONLIGHT!

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# WHAT HAPPENED?



## THAT WAS THEN:

feeling sick inside as our stomach turned,  
wondering if the clerk in that store had heard about Jesus or not ...

feeling nervous about bringing His Name up  
to that stranger at the bus stop ...

staying up at night,  
caring about the condition of our roommate's soul ...

forking over the money to buy a Christian metal album  
to give to our friend ...

## THIS IS NOW:

wishing the clerk would "hurry up and sell up" ...

wondering if that rough looking person at the bus stop has a weapon ...

sleeping ... so tired ...

downloading all the songs from kazaa ...